INDIANA COLLECTION: CALUMET REGION HISTOR
LAKE CO. HISTORY

THE INDIANA SESQUICENTENNIAL COMMITTEE

PRESENTS

LAKE COUNTY
in the
CIVIL WAR

1861 - 1865

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Compiled by

THE HAMMOND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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. . . Editors

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From Harrison's Landing, Virginia

"I send the remains of Edwin R. Sprague by express tomorrow morning to his Father directed to Hobart and to your care . . . . We had him embalmed today so that he will be ready in the morning - He will look natural and all decomposition stops immediately. He may be kept as long as they like without any trouble. The coffin will be opened by cutting the zink. It will be all fassened (sic) up air tight to keep it from dampness. As long as it is kept in the house it will remain perfect . . ."

From a letter of John Wheeler, Colonel, 20th Indiana Regiment, to James H. Luther, Crown Point; August 10, 1862.

Semi - Centennial Poem 1884

Full fifty year ago,

Amid the winter's snow,

These groves, this prairie land,

Our northern lake shore strand,

Were bare, and bleak, and wild;

But white man, wife and child,

One cabin dwelling place had found,

Had come to hold and till the ground

The Red men are no more

Upon our norther shore, . . .

The tread of busy feet

Is now on many a street . . .

The busy marts of trade,

Where sales for gain are made . . .

The ponderous loaded car,

Bringing the freight from afar,

Drawn by steam's wonderous power,

Is passing every hour . . .

Peace to the homes of Lake

Each must its record make . . .

At peace with God and man,

Heeding great Nature's plan . . .

In summer's heat and winter's cold,

May God protect us as of old.

. . . Timothy Ball

On April 12, 1861, the Confederates fired on Fort Sumter, Charleston, South Carolina. Although no one knew it at the time, it would be four long and bloody years to the very day, April 12, 1865, that Wilson's Union Cavalry captured Montgomery, Alabama, the original capital of the Confederacy, and the conflict was over.

It was a costly conflict. Indiana contributed 208,367 men. 24,416 of these men were killed or died of disease during the war.

This prospect, too, was unknown on that fatal starting date. Four days later, Governor Oliver P. (Throck)Morton issued a call for 5,000 volunteers.

Among the 16 companies that instantly sprang to arms was the 20th Indiana, organized at Lafayette. It was composed largely of Lake County residents.

Let us turn to the account of our peerless Lake County historian of early times, Timothy Ball, for an account of what happened in those stirring days.

"At Crown Point, the next county seat westward, then a small inland town, having no railroad connection with the outer world, depending on the little stage that came from Hobart or Ross for their news, but with a largely Republican and intensely loyal body of citizens, the Charleston gun, when its sound did reach them, aroused them also to speedy action. Enlistments were made with sufficient speed to secure about seventy men a place in that Ninth Regiment, which from its war record became known as the "Bloody Ninth." Lake County in 1860 had a population of 9,145, containing about eighteen hundred families. And, as near as can be known, some three hundred enlising in Illinois, one thousand men from Lake County went into the Union Army." (NORTHWESTERN INDIANA: FROM 1800 to 1900; pages 166 and 167)

The greater bulk of information as to what happened at the Lake County area stems from another of the Rev. Ball's tomes: LAKE COUNTY, INDIANA: From 1834 to 1872. The following is a summary of pages 121 to 127 of that book.

"The pulpits of Crown Point, as elsewhere in the West, patriotic but not political, were thoroughly on the side of the Union. Services were held from time to time appropriate to the several occasions of joy and sorrow, or hopes and of fears; fasts and thanksgivings were observed; and earnest words of religious teaching and patriotic feeling were uttered. After the fall of Vicksburg, and the capture of Fortress Monroe, in 1863, the President recommended the observance of a day of Thanksgiving."

Mr. Ball then quotes a poem in full, written "by one of the pastors in town", whom we rather feel was the Rev. Mr. Ball himself, as he was quite talented, and the author of more than one slim books of poetry, written for every occasion. But we follow his words further:

"When at length the war cloud passed, and in the spring of 1865 the rebel armies surrendered, the bronzed and war-torn veterans hastened back to their peaceful homes. But many a mother's eyes were dim with tears, and the hearts of many a wife and maiden throbbed with anguish, as the "boys in blue" returned; for their own sons, and husbands, and brothers had given their lives to maintain our national existence. Nobly did many of the families of Lake resign their loved ones to the grandness of the cause that called them forth to dare, and do, and die; but they nevertheless felt that some of their choicest treasures had perished in the terrible conflict."

Even the Rev. Ball was not untouched. His own dearly beloved brother Charley came home and died on September 12, 1865. In 1863 he wrote a poem of anguish to his sister, married and living in Alabama. Another sister - Henrietta - had just died. He received a wire and sped 1,000 miles to home, bearly reaching there in time for the funeral. Alas, his sister could not come. And he write this poem to her, which we quote in part: (POEMS AND HYMNS: 1889), pages 21 - 25.

A Message from T. H. B. to E. H. W.,
Grove Hill, Alabama 1863

"Seven boys and girls are we;
Two of us in the church-yard lie,
Beneath the church-yard tree"

Beloved sister, tidings sad I have
Which my heart longs to send to you and yours.
How can I send it? Between us and you
Lie the red fields of battle. Fearful strife
is raging now, and precious life-blood flows.
The written messengers of joy and grief
Pass not that line of strife. The lightning spark,
Though trained to do man's bidding, cannot flash
To you, as once it could, the thrilling words,
The message sad or glad. Around your clime
The might of human power, just power and right,
We call it, guards and barriers strong has placed,
Which shut out knowledge. Ah, my sister dear,
Too long, too long the dwellers in your land
Have shut out knowledge. True of them it is,
Once what they could they would not know, and now
What they would know they cannot. Nor can we.
War rages. Who has seen such strife before?
Since God permits 'tis well. Wise ends no doubt
He will secure, for over all the strife,
And carnage, and despair, and gloom of this
Wild warfare which man's passions seem to rule
He holds a firm all powerful grasp, he who
Is just, yet merciful and good, a Judge,
A gracious Father, an avenging God.
God rules, and He is in this strife. -- 'Tis well.

In the next stanza he breaks the sorrowful news to her "The youngest of us seven, Henrie dear, Has ceased to live on earth." A careful reading of the first stanza gives an idea as to how the people of this area felt at that time, and it is interesting to note that he could not resist the temptation, sweet Christian that he was, to give a thrust at his sister's neighbors (". . . too long the dwellers in your land Have shut out knowledge").

He resumes: "Of our 1,000 men, how many fell on the red fields of blood, and died in camp and hospital, cannot be now ascertained. There is an old saying: "Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori" -- "It is pleasant and noble to die for one's country." He then listed the names on the Roll of Honor, Volume VIII, of the Adjutant General's Report. He then calculated that 20% -- the general average -- was true of those from Lake County, and 200 was the total loss.

Sadly he mused, "We may well hope that the whole nation has been sufficiently taught not to kindle again the flames of fraternal strife. Multitudes of this generation, both North and South, will carry with them to their graves the dark shadows which passed over their souls, in those fearful years of the life struggles of a great nation, as loved ones so untimely fell; and, of these, young and loyal Lake may well claim to have their full share."

We then get a hint of the economic effects, good and bad. This almost seems repetitious in this year of 1966, when we are experiencing the same thing:

"Although for four years of this decade the absorbing interest was the war, and the withdrawing of a thousand men from our industrial pursuits was at times sorely felt, yet prices advanced enormously, and all kinds of farm products found a ready and remunerative sale, and improvements and increase of inhabitants still went forward. In 1861 corn sold for 17¢ a bushel and a dull market. Before the close of the war, in 1864, corn sold for ninety cents a bushel at Dyer Station. Pork, which had also been low, as well as 11 other agricultural products, advanced to sixteen dollars a hundredweight, and most other products in proportion. "Greenbacks" were issued by the Government, bounties and quarterly payments were sent home by the soldiers, and money became plentiful.

"Many good frame buildings were erected in the last 10 years; but about 1860 commenced an era of a far better class of buildings. Henry Dittmers, who bought, in 1859, that farm in Cedar Lake, where the Ball family had for twenty-two years resided, erected one of the first of these in 1860. He bought common lumber in Chicago for seven dollars a thousand, and laid out in a house and barns some four thousand dollars. His example was followed by many others. Most of the best buildings now in the county, and especially of those in the towns and villages, have been erected since 1860.

"In 1865 a new impulse was given to Crown Point, and to all the southern portion of the county, by the completion of the Cincinnati Air Line Railroad, afterward known as the Great Eastern and now called Pittsburg, Cincinnati and St. Louis Railway. This road, passing through Crown Point, started it at once into new life. Railroad Addition was laid out and added to the town, a depot building was erected, grain houses were built, and a western railroad growth commenced".

Railroad Addition, noted just above, is on the northeast end of Crown Point, south of the Pennsylvania Railroad, whose multifarious names are given above. Those who have been mystified by the names of the streets in that area, such as "Grant" or "Foote," must realize that this was the period immediately following the Civil War and it was inevitable that hero worship must even spill over into real estate promotions!

And where was the industrial might of today -- Gary, East Chicago and Hammond? They simply weren't even on the map. Many names appear on the maps of that era that are unknown today: "Hartsdale" -- "Klaasville" -- "Tinkerville" -- "Indiana City". Crown Point was the city of Lake County, even without the railroad!

This, then, was the home front.

What were the soldiers doing . . . thinking . . . during this time?

Mrs. Avis Brown, a former president of the Lake County Historical Association, has supplied us with a number of letters written by soldiers and our frontspiece was a quotation from a letter written by Col. John Wheeler of the 20th Indiana.

Col. Wheeler had an unhappy task in this letter writing, and further on he states: "I can not write any more, as I have to write to Mr. Sprague and to Mrs. E. R. Sprague, and that is a job I, of all others, dread to do. But duty compels men to do things that is not very pleasant at times". Colonel Wheeler himself was killed at Gettysburg on July 2, 1863.

The weather in Virginia was not pleasant. "One thing is certain," he states, "that we can not march except at night. No man of our latitude can stand it to be out on a march in this climate at this time. The nights are usually cool and very pleasant". The famous 7 Days Battles around Richmond had concluded the month prior, and McClellan's troops were now safe around Harrison's Landing.

He despaired of having to "go through the work of drilling a company and regiment from the raw material to get it into a shape fit to do service . . . The 20th is all schooled and educated and only wants a little care and attention to keep it all right." He announces happily: "But the boys will not shrink to do their duty when called upon".

What of the line soldier? Sergeant James H. Luther, on September 10, 1864, wrote his father after a skirmish: ". . . the Noble 20th Indiana received fighting marching Order last evening about 1:30 o'clock to advance about one mile to the left of our present position . . . to Charge the enemy's Picket Line (it being too near our main line for health, in case they should attempt a charge some dark evening) which was done precisely at 1 1/4 o'clock." Further along he states: "I received a Crown Point Register night before last, for which I am very much obliged, as we all like to read it." In this letter he mentions his brother Eddie, "How much I did wish to see him".

A letter from Eddie is in the collection also. A member of the 119th Indiana, he wrote from Union City, Tennessee, on December 22, 1863: "There was two Deserters from this Regiment brought in today, tied together . . . the Officer in charge had a stick drove in the ground, a rope tied around their neck (tight enough to choke anything but a deserter) and their feet brought over their heads, making the appearance of a wagon wheel. I understand that one of them is to be shot, this being the second time he had deserted. Such are the fruits of desertion. There was not a soldier, even their comrades cast a pitying glance for the traitorous d____ls.

"I wish I could be at home to-night. Eat a bowl of bread and milk chat in a comfortable seat by the fire and then spend a happy evening in a comfortable bed. All at home. But this way of living was all caused by this rebellion. And we must put up with it. But I hope the day is not far distant when this war will close. And peace and happiness will once more dominate. My fingers are cold and I must close. Give my love to mother. And tell her I used the most thought of article I have, viz., the needle case she made me, mending my socks and Pants."

This very affectionate son, after the usual greeting, gave a very special touch to his letter that tugs at the heart back over a period of 103 years. In very huge letters at the bottom he printed:

GOOD NIGHT

EDDIE

The Luther boys, incidentally, were highly literate, as can be evinced from the choice of language and the beautiful flowery handwriting so characteristic of that day. And the sentiment is universal, amongst homesick soldiers the world over, even unto this day.

James Luther wrote an exhausted letter on May 15th, 1864, from the Wilderness, and the headquarters of the 20th Indiana.

"After the most hard Battle ever fought I am still alive and that is about all. Received no wounds to amount to anything." He then recites the captured cannon -- 3 steel and 5 brass -- and the 2,500 prisoners their Brigade had taken.

"I have not time to write full particular as the skirmish line is getting up pretty heavy fire and another attack is anticipated soon. Will write as soon as permitted. The Battle is raging a short distance . . . Ser. Shicker is wounded severing his Arm will probably be amputated."

Later, resuming his former smooth handwriting, he adds, in what was obviously a more calmer moment: " The Battle ceases and the Rebels in full skedaddle. Killed in Co. B James D. Merrill, Horace Fuller, Lawrence Frantz. David Pinkerton (is) wounded mortally (he did die later, Ed. Note) and probably dead ere this. Wounded are Jake Jones, Chrtopher Jones, A. F. Danst, Asker Dutton, Charles Snyder, Jack Scritchfield, Richard Wiper. Some more but cannot think of them all. The 20th has lost about 40 killed, 350 wounded. And about 74 mission. I will write again tomorrow or next day".

This was Lake County in the Civil War.

THE NECROLOGY LIST

Twentieth Regiment - Company B

Names	Where Dying	When
Col. John Wheeler	Gettysburg	July 2, 1863
George W. Edgerton	Gettysburg	July 2, 1863
Horace Fuller	Wilderness	May 5, 1864
Lawrence Frantz	Spottsylvania	May 12, 1864
John Griesell	David Island	August 16, 1862
M. Hafey	Pittsburg	- - - - -
C. Hazworth	- - - - -	May 26, 1863
Wm. Johnson	Petersburg	June 18, 1864
Albert Kale	Camp Hampton	Dec. 17, 1861
Wm. Mutchler	Camp Smith	April 25, 1862
P. Mutchler	Washington	July 15, 1862
James Merrill	Wilderness	May 5, 1864
S. Pangburn	Andersonville	November 6, 1864
C. Potter	- - - - -	- - - - -
D. Pinckerton	Wilderness	May 5, 1864
J. Richmond	Gettysburg	July 2, 1863
John F. Torr	Washington	November 24, 1862
Isaac Williams	- - - - -	July 5, 1863
Charles Winters	City Point	June 19, 1864

Seventy-Third Regiment - Company A

Lewis Atkins	Nashville	November 22, 1862
Eli Atwood	Nashville	November 29, 1862
John Childers	Nashville	December 3, 1862
John F. Earley	Stone River	December 31, 1862
R. W. Fuller	Indianapolis	August 2, 1863
Wm. Frazier	Nashville	December 15, 1862
J. M. Fuller	Gallatin	January 29, 1863
M. Graves	Nashville	December 16, 1862

Seventy-Third Regiment - Company A (Cont.)

T. W. Loving	Nashville	September 30, 1863
A. Lamphier	Nashville	January 7, 1863
L. Morris	Nashville	April 30, 1863
I. W. Moore	Gallatin	December 29, 1862
John Maxwell	Scottsville	November 9, 1862
Albert Nichols	Nashville	December 1, 1862
James Roney	Nashville	February 8, 1863
C. Van Burg	Bowling Green	December 23, 1862
M. Vincent	Gallatin	January 8, 1863
E. Woods	Nashville	November 29, 1862
E. Welch	Stone River	December 31, 1862
S. White	Blunt's Farm	May 2, 1863

Ninety-Ninth Regiment - Company A

D. F. Sawyer	- - - - -	February 12, 1863
O. E. Atkins	Nickajack	July 6, 1864
D. T. Burnham	- - - - -	August 21, 1864
J. Bartholomew	Andersonville	August 22, 1864
J. D. Clingham	Huntsville	July 11, 1864
H. A. Case	LaGrange	March 10, 1863
James Foster	Atlanta	July 22, 1864
James Horton	Atlanta	July 22, 1864
H. H. Haskins	Andersonville	October 20, 1864
R. T. Harris	La Grange	March 11, 1863
John Lorey	Black River	September 21, 1863
Adam Mock	Black River	September 11, 1863
N. Newman	Black River	August 4, 1863
T. C. Pinnel	La Grange	February 7, 1863
Corydon Pierce	Washington	April, 1863
Albert Robbins	- - - - -	August 6, 1864
J. Schmidt	Indianapolis	July 28, 1863
J. Stickleman	- - - - -	September 23, 1864
A. Vandervert	- - - - -	March 19, 1863
M. Winand	At home	December 11, 1864

It seems singular that the four companies should have lost almost the same number of men. Company G, and Company B. nineteen each; and the two A companies each twenty. Taking twenty per cent. as the general average, our whole loss would be two hundred men.

Terrible was that necessity that caused throughout the North the loss of so many young and valuable lives; and that appeal to arms on the part of the South, for the settlement of a long dispute, must be held responsible for a large amount of life-blood and treasure. We may well hope that the whole nation has been sufficiently taught not kindle again the flames of fraternal strife. Multitudes of this generation, both North and South, will carry them to their graves the dark shadows which passed over their souls, in those fearful years of the life struggles of a great nation, as loved ones so untimely fell; and, of these, young and loyal Lake may well claim to have their full share. Some proper estimate here ought to be placed on the value of a united and not a dissevered nation.